United Nations A/C.3/54/SR.21

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
20 December 1999
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 22 October 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Galuška ..... (Czech Republic)

Contents

Agenda item 114: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (*continued*)

Agenda item 115: Right of peoples to self-determination (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

99-81818 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 114: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (*continued*) (A/54/18, A/54/98, A/54/299 and A/54/347)

Agenda item 115: Right of peoples to self-determination (*continued*) (A/54/98, A/54/118-S/1999/633, A/54/326 and A/54/327)

1. **Mr. Tatsis** (Greece) said that today's youth commonly believed that the various human rights instruments were inadequate or were not properly enforced and thus did not help the victims of discrimination. The protection and promotion of human rights called for the participation of society as a whole and of every individual.

2. During the past 10 years his Government had implemented various policies to combat xenophobia, intolerance and racism, most of them involving the participation of young people. A National Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and a non-governmental forum entitled "All Different, All Equal" were examples of bodies which had been established.

3. The National Youth Council in Greece believed that it was its duty to further those policies. In the contemporary world individuals from different cultural, national and religious backgrounds lived side by side. Greece was situated in a region in which efforts to settle the crisis encountered racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, further highlighting the lack of mutual understanding. Eliminating racism and combating discrimination, which frequently led to armed conflicts and endangered international peace and security, must be a priority. On the eve of a new millennium, everyone had a duty to help create a more human world, based on principles of freedom, democracy, peace, tolerance and solidarity.

4. To bring about harmony in society, young people must strive for a common goal in an understanding environment. Greece wanted a south-eastern Europe in which tolerance, democracy, peace, solidarity and mutual understanding prevailed, in which a new generation could strive together, and in which each individual felt personally responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights. Accordingly, it had been decided to establish a South-Eastern European Youth Forum which would provide the framework for exchanging ideas on youth matters, promoting common solutions to common problems and organizing events, campaigns and exchanges in the spirit of the slogan "All Different, All Equal".

5. The National Youth Council firmly believed that non-governmental organizations had a role to play in constructing a new world and expressed the hope that the United Nations would consider favourably the establishment of the South-Eastern European Youth Forum.

6. **Mr. Fritsche** (Liechtenstein) said that self-determination, which was included among the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and further elaborated upon in common article 1 of the International Covenants of 1966, had indubitably played an important part in the history of the United Nations. While there was agreement on its importance, however, there was a strong difference of views as to its current relevance; some viewed self-determination exclusively in the context of decolonization and regarded it as an achievement of the past; others, including her Government, were convinced that the principle of self-determination and its application were of continuing, if not increased, relevance to the work of the United Nations.

7. The two major challenges facing the United Nations in Kosovo and East Timor demonstrated that the question of the right of self-determination was not entirely settled. In that regard, she would like to make two points: first, the right of self-determination could not be exercised through one isolated and single act but had to be the result of a sustained process; second, self-determination could take several different forms, of which independent statehood was only one.

8. Obviously, it was the second element which had given rise to controversy, for the equation of self-determination with independent statehood had no legal basis. The Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (1970) made it quite clear that there were other ways to exercise the right of self-determination which were largely unexplored.

9. Over the years, her delegation had introduced its ideas on the right of self-determination and had tried to explain its initiative, which in summary was the following: exercise of the right of self-determination could take the form of a dialogue between the central government and a community living in the State concerned; that dialogue would be based on the recognition that the community had the right to self-determination, which should be exercised through levels of self-administration or self-government. Thanks to that proactive approach, internal tensions could be settled peacefully before they engendered violence or, worse, armed conflict. The majority of internal armed conflicts were the result of tensions between central governments and communities whose legitimate interests had not been

recognized. The initiative on self-determination was intended to address such situations before irreversible damage was done, which was generally when a community asserted independent statehood.

10. She was happy to be able to say that her country's initiative, which was based on international law and aimed at ensuring the full exercise of the right of self-determination for the benefit of the international community as a whole, was in harmony with a general tendency prevailing at the United Nations and elsewhere. Given the magnitude of certain crises and the human and economic toll exacted by them, prevention was surely the approach which the international community should adopt. In spite of considerable hesitation and reluctance, the idea of a culture of prevention advanced by the Secretary-General had given rise to strong political enthusiasm. Her delegation wished to contribute to that momentum with its own initiative on self-determination. The development of a culture of prevention and of other concepts, such as human security, required a long-term concerted effort from many players. Her delegation therefore welcomed the efforts by the Secretariat to improve coordination of the activities undertaken by various entities of the United Nations system concerned with preventive diplomacy and conflict management.

11. The Liechtenstein research program on self-determination at Princeton University was developing its activities on both the academic and the political levels. It had organized in Liechtenstein a colloquium on peace and the future in south-eastern Europe, a summary of which would shortly be made available to all States Members of the United Nations.

12. **Ms. Li Sangu** (China), after stating that the fight against new forms of racism was the major task on the promotion and protection of human rights, informed the Committee of her delegation's comments with regard to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was to be held in 2001.

13. The international community should accord priority to the question of racism, particularly the new forms in which it appeared and the resurgence of nazism. Her delegation was pleased to note that the Commission on Human Rights had established a working group as a preparatory body for the World Conference and hoped that the parties concerned would reach agreement on the mandate of the Conference and other substantive issues so that the preparatory work could start as soon as possible.

14. The Commission on Human Rights and the relevant United Nations organs should make the preparations for the World Conference one of their main tasks in 2000 and should be provided with the necessary human, material and financial resources.

15. Activities undertaken in connection with the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination should continue in cooperation with the convening of the World Conference, and the United Nations should continue to support the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and other related agencies in their efforts to implement the work of the Third Decade.

16. Efforts should be made to prevent incitement to racism through high-tech instruments. In particular, the Internet should be used as a means of disseminating information and organizing activities against racism and racial discrimination. At the same time, Member States and the United Nations institutions concerned should explore ways of banning the spread of racism through the modern media and formulate measures to that end.

17. The right to self-determination was an important component of human rights and was proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), as well as in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. No country should be able to impose its own ideology or its own social system on others and the right to self-determination should never be used as an excuse for secessionist activities, which had become one of the underlying causes of war and armed conflict.

18. In recent years, the General Assembly and other United Nations organs had been paying increasing attention to the question of the scope of application of the principle of self-determination. Her delegation, like many others, believed that the relevant provisions of the Charter and the international instruments relating to the right to self-determination should be correctly understood and implemented: the right to self-determination should not be construed as authorizing or encouraging actions that might impair the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States which complied with the principles of equal rights and self-determination and thus possessed a government representative of the whole people of the territory without any exception.

19. The restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, and the early settlement of the question of Palestine in a just and reasonable manner was the key to a lasting peace in the Middle East. China had been following the development of the situation closely and had taken note of the recent

progress achieved in the peace process. Her delegation was convinced that the achievement of peace and stability in the Middle East represented the common aspiration of the peoples of the region, was in keeping with their fundamental interests and would be conducive to peace and stability throughout the world. In conclusion, she said that her delegation hoped that all parties concerned would, on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the agreements that had been concluded and guided by the principle of land for peace, strive to move the peace talks forward in a positive and realistic manner.

20. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that the elimination of racism and racial discrimination remained a serious challenge which the international community must take up as the end of the millennium approached. Although apartheid had been conquered and the enslaved people had regained their liberty and their dignity, racism persisted in new forms of discrimination based on culture, nationality or religion. That "neoracism" was directed against vulnerable social groups such as migrant workers, refugees, ethnic or religious minorities and indigenous populations, who were reproached for being "different"; that "difference", instead of being celebrated as a source of richness and complementarity, became a synonym for rejection and discrimination. The testimony of the Rapporteur on racism was very eloquent and drew attention to the serious consequences of the persistence in certain developed countries of racist acts resulting from the proliferation of racist, Fascist and neo-Nazi groups.

21. Through the new media and the Internet, racism was finding fresh support and new universal tools aimed primarily at children and adolescents. It was important to condemn the existence of universally accessible sites which called openly for hatred of others and to work together on the formulation of a code of conduct for the users and suppliers of Internet services so that the new technology would become an effective teaching instrument in the fight against racist propaganda.

22. The Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was almost at an end without having achieved its objectives owing to a lack of resources and political will. Algeria, which contributed regularly to the special Trust Fund, urged donors to do the same in order to allow the Programme of Action for the Decade to be implemented. In that context, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was to be held in 2001 in South Africa, would allow the international community to review the progress that had been achieved and the obstacles that remained to be overcome. In that connection, the seven objectives assigned to the World Conference should be carefully studied so that a programme of action could be formulated that would deal with all aspects of the problem. The success of the Conference required the involvement of the whole United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, as well as the universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which 150 countries had already acceded.

23. Since its creation, the United Nations had kept pace with the changes that had taken place and the number of Member States had more than tripled, thus establishing its universality. The adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples more than 40 years earlier had helped to speed up the downfall of the last bastions of colonialism. Despite the progress that had been achieved, quite recently in East Timor, the work of decolonization remained incomplete since other peoples still had to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and freedom. That was the case, in the Middle East, of the Palestinian people which had been dispossessed of its land and national rights. It was to be hoped that the relaunching of the peace process would allow all the countries of the region to live in peace and security once the Israeli forces had been withdrawn from the Golan Heights and Lebanon.

24. That was also the case of the Saharan people, who, after almost a quarter of a century, were demanding their right to self-determination. Thanks to the agreements reached in Houston between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front and the acceptance by the two parties of the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General, particularly the new date for the referendum in July 2000, the time had come to exercise that right. Accordingly, the United Nations remained fully responsible with regard to the Saharan people, as the resolution adopted by the Fourth Committee on 8 October 1999 recalled. The international community and the Security Council should be vigilant more than ever in order to ensure that the settlement plan and implementation agreements were strictly carried out and respected so that the Saharan people could exercise their right.

25. **Ms. de Armas García** (Cuba), speaking on agenda item 115, said that international relations were currently undergoing changes characterized by a disregard for the principles of international law as established by the Charter of the United Nations. In the political sphere, in particular, the great Powers were attempting to impose, through so-called humanitarian interventions, diplomacy based on force, which called into question territorial integrity, the sovereignty of States and the right of peoples of self-

determination: that had been the case, in particular, in Kosovo. It was therefore necessary to restore the primacy of the Charter as the cornerstone of the United Nations to ensure that peace was maintained with respect for the principles enshrined in it. The international community should also firmly reject the repeated attempts that had been made to broaden the concept of self-determination to include individuals, since such a change would have a considerable negative impact on respect for the principles laid down in the Charter.

26. The exercise of the right to self-determination was a prerequisite for the enjoyment of human rights. Cuba reaffirmed once again the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to decide their destiny and demanded the unconditional return of all Arab territories occupied by Israel, including the Syrian Golan and the occupied strip in southern Lebanon. Furthermore, her delegation once again demanded the return of the Guantanamo naval base, the occupation of which by the United States of America constituted a violation of the Cuban people's right to exercise the right to self-determination throughout the territory.

27. For many years, the consideration of the agenda item on the right of peoples to self-determination had involved the drafting of a report on the question of the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right to self-determination. Cuba fully supported what was stated in the current report (A/54/326) concerning the illegal activities conducted by individuals against their country of origin for a foreign Power and, in that regard, voiced its serious concern over the fact that, although those activities had been denounced many times, the Governments of the States in which mercenaries were trained did nothing to halt those activities or bring them to justice. Cuba denounced the impunity with which many mercenaries acted and reserved the right to halt those acts and protect its citizens, sovereignty and independence.

28. As part of its willingness to cooperate with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and support the work of the Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries, her country had invited the Rapporteur to travel to Cuba. His visit had taken place from 12 to 18 September 1999. Cuba reiterated its support for the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and all actions aimed at guaranteeing the full exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination.

29. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan) speaking on agenda item 114, said that it had been necessary, not so long ago, to work long and patiently in order to eliminate institutionalized forms of racism which had given rise to grave injustices. The information contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on measures to combat contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/54/347), which indicated that new forms of racism and racial discrimination were on the rise in various societies, should be given immediate attention. In that regard, Pakistan noted that some countries had begun to enact appropriate legislation aimed at preventing hate-mongerers from using the Internet to spread their doctrines and believed that the international community should draw up a code of conduct to control the use of the Internet, with due regard for the principle of freedom of speech.

30. It was also disquieting that in many countries, indigenous populations, ethnic and religious minorities and immigrants were also subjected to racial hatred and discrimination. All those social groups contributed to social and cultural development and should therefore be protected against such phenomena. Furthermore, in certain countries, some people were attempting to establish a causal link between Islam, on the one hand, and fanaticism and terrorism on the other. That "islamophobia" was likely to give rise to hatred against those who practised Islam and should be denounced as fallacious: Islam was a religion of peace and tolerance and avoided extremism. In that connection, Pakistan welcomed the adoption in 1999 by the Commission on Human Rights of a resolution denouncing attempts to defame Islam and make its teachings responsible for the increase in terrorist acts.

31. Of all social groups, young people clearly constituted the one that was most targeted by hate mongerers and extremist groups. For that reason, it was important to educate them and conduct information campaigns to protect them from the influence of those who spread hatred. At the international level, full use must be made of existing instruments for that purpose. The Plan of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination should make it possible to combat new forms of racism and racial discrimination, and the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education should be used to mobilize non-governmental organizations to promote values of tolerance, brotherhood, understanding and respect for the diversity of cultures and views, particularly among young people. Along the same lines, the transdisciplinary UNESCO project entitled "Towards a culture of peace" should be supported in order to raise awareness, particularly among the young, about the social costs of racism.

32. The World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination in 2001 should once again mobilize the international community with regard to those two topics and

add to the arsenal of instruments and measures that had already been adopted. In that regard, Pakistan welcomed the offer by the Government of South Africa to host the Conference and hoped that the Organization would extend to it all the necessary financial assistance. It also welcomed the efforts by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to coordinate activities being conducted at the regional and international level in order to prepare for the Conference.

33. Convinced, by virtue of its traditions and teachings of Islam, that racism and racial discrimination were profoundly inhuman, Pakistan would continue to participate actively in the efforts of the international community to eliminate them.

34. **Mr. Oron** (Israel), speaking on agenda item 114, said that, although hybrid ethnic and national identities had become part of the social landscape, they had not yet become the rule and were all too often accompanied by overt manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. As the Special Rapporteur on those issues had noted in his report (A/54/347, para. 69), verbal racism and xenophobia had become commonplace and ingrained in society as a result of the increasing sophistication of racially motivated acts, of which the members of the extreme right and neo-Nazi organizations were the main purveyors.

35. Thus, the "wave of cybernetic racism", as the Special Rapporteur had called it, had dramatically increased the number of Web sites inciting to hatred, including sites denying the Holocaust, the existence of which was related to the rise in far-right movements. In that regard, his Government was deeply concerned at the results of the current year's elections in Austria and hoped that the new Austrian Government would be based on democratic parties, not on radical elements that raised bitter memories.

36. No society was immune to racism and intolerance, and Israeli society was no exception. In its turbulent history, inequalities had arisen between different social groups, particularly the Jewish and the Israeli-Arab populations, which did not enjoy the same degree of State support in a variety of fields. However, while much remained to be done in areas such as housing, pre-school education and access to senior Government positions, major progress had been achieved through the work of State institutions and organizations of civil society. For example, the Ministry of Education had launched a wide publicity campaign to eliminate social stereotypes, particularly those associated with Jews and Arabs and, on 24 September 1999, following the attempted bombings several days previously in Haifa and Tiberias, nine Arab and ten Jewish school directors had published in the Israeli press a communiqué denouncing acts of racism and discrimination between Jews and Arabs.

37. The elimination of racism and related forms of intolerance was among the major challenges that the international community would face in the twenty-first century. In that regard, Israel welcomed the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and hoped to contribute to its success by helping to find effective ways of combating racism and of conveying a clear, convincing message to civil society around the world.

38. **Ms. Di Felice** (Venezuela) said that throughout its history, the United Nations had made genuine progress in the struggle against racism and racial discrimination. For example, the mobilization of the international community and, in particular, of the United Nations, had unquestionably been a key factor in the collapse of apartheid. However, it was discouraging to see the scourge of racism reappear in new forms, backed by racist and xenophobic ideologies. In that regard, her delegation noted with regret the uncontrolled use of the media and the Internet to advocate the supremacy of certain races or ethnic groups and to disseminate ideas which, by attacking the principle of the equality of all human beings, constituted abuse of the right to freedom of expression.

39. Three years prior to the end of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, it must be recognized that little progress had been made and that there was little funding available for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Decade. For that reason, her delegation was encouraged by the actions taken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in particular, its establishment in 1998 of a racism project team to coordinate all the activities of the Decade, and by the High Commissioner's appeals for increased contributions to the Trust Fund for the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to ensure the implementation of future activities.

40. Venezuela had been a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination since 1969, and the country's various democratic Governments had taken steps to guarantee implementation of the provisions of the Convention. The new national constituent assembly, which had been elected by popular vote in order to draft a new constitution, planned to expand the guarantee of the right to equality and non-discrimination enshrined in article 61 of the current Constitution. The new text stated not only that discrimination on grounds of race, age, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic

or social origin, sexual orientation, disability or state of health was prohibited, but also that the State would grant special protection to persons who were at a disadvantage for any of those reasons and would punish those responsible for violations committed against such persons. Those principles were deeply rooted in Venezuelan society, which had always welcomed people of different races, religions and cultures who had made a valuable contribution to the country's economic and social development. Her Government therefore attached great importance to universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to the implementation of its provisions.

41. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance would unquestionably provide an important opportunity to review the international community's progress in that area and the remaining obstacles, including the inescapable issue of the rise of new forms of intolerance. The conclusions emerging from the Conference should be action-oriented and should include a series of targeted measures in areas such as prevention, education and protection, together with provisions aimed at guaranteeing that the United Nations would receive the financial and other resources needed for the implementation of the activities relating thereto. The International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in 2001, would help to increase worldwide awareness of the goals of the Conference.

42. Her delegation considered that preparations for the Conference should be extensive and comprehensive and should involve all groups which were working towards that end and participating in efforts to eliminate racial discrimination, including Governments, the United Nations system and regional and non-governmental organizations. Harmonious coexistence within diversity was the best way of overcoming, at the national and global levels, the problems resulting from racial discrimination.

43. **Mr. Hadjiargyrou** (Cyprus) speaking on agenda item 114, said that the dangers posed by intolerance should not be underestimated in a world of more than 6 billion human beings where the economy and migration were accelerating. It was therefore imperative that the international community should address that issue with determination and perseverance. Its actions must be centred on a common approach, which was only possible on a global level within the framework of the United Nations. His delegation welcomed the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General, the Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and expressed its satisfaction at the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. That Conference would provide an opportunity to give new impetus to worldwide efforts to combat all forms of intolerance.

44. Special attention should be given to a preventive approach to fighting racism by making universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination a priority and by drawing attention to the model legislation developed by the United Nations. The role of non-governmental organizations in producing practical solutions and assisting Governments in implementing programmes should also be emphasized. Cyprus had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention, including the amendment to article 8, paragraph 6, and was one of the few States to have made the declaration under article 14 of the Convention. Its fifteenth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination would soon be submitted.

45. In an effort to reach full conformity with the Convention and take note of the suggestions of the Committee, Cyprus had modified its legislation on the protection of refugees and displaced persons, as well as the procedure for acquiring Cypriot citizenship. It had also established various institutions to facilitate the implementation of the Convention and strengthened cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

46. In the field of education, which Cyprus regarded as the most effective way of eliminating indirect and structural forms of racial discrimination, the academic curriculum had been reinforced and programmes had been instituted to promote respect for all human beings and all peoples and to promote a spirit of tolerance, acceptance of differences and cooperation. Several other programmes had been created, in particular language programmes for the children of immigrants and training programmes for civil servants on the provisions of the Convention, and information campaigns had been launched to increase public awareness of the Convention and the existing body of legal and administrative remedies.

47. The occupation by the Turkish army of a part of its territory since 1974 had prevented Cyprus from implementing the provisions of the Convention throughout its territory. That fact had been underlined by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its report (A/53/18), in which it stated that the continuing artificial division of the country had adversely affected efforts to

reduce tension among the various ethnic and religious communities which comprised the population. The report also expressed concern that there was insufficient information on the demographic composition of the occupied part of Cyprus.

48. Despite positive developments during the 30 years of struggle against racism and racial discrimination, the resurgence of racial prejudice, racism and xenophobia, even in societies considered beyond that stage was a clear indication that States and the international community must redouble their efforts to combat those phenomena.

49. **Mr. Jit** (India) expressed his delegation's concern at current attempts at selective reinterpretation of certain fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the right to self-determination and the principle of equal rights as enshrined in Articles 1 (2) and 55 of the Charter. Those principles, which had been reaffirmed subsequently in many international decisions and instruments, were intended to facilitate the decolonization process. They were based on underlying concepts of sovereignty, the territorial integrity of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Those provisions were clear and universally applicable, yet they were not being applied according to the letter and spirit intended by their authors.

50. The expectations raised by decolonization had been dashed more than once in preceding decades. In many regions of the world, freedom was trampled on, regimes governed by stealth or coercion, and relations between States were still very unequal. In its most extreme form, the exercise of power hid behind apparently legitimate humanitarian concerns to subvert a country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic choice. Democratic societies, which were open and tolerant, were particularly vulnerable to such threats. If such efforts were allowed to succeed, however, every ethnic group, every religion or belief, and in fact every individual would become a nation. That was surely not the intent of the Charter.

51. Terrorism attacked democratic choice, the very basis of the principle of self-determination. Security Council resolution 1269 (1999) was therefore a welcome development and his delegation hoped that the report of the Secretary-General would reflect on the impact of terrorism on the fundamental rights of peoples.

52. The increasing use of mercenaries and child soldiers by private forces and terrorist groups was a source of serious concern and his delegation agreed with the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on the question of mercenaries, in particular with regard to the need for legal measures to combat that problem. It was to be hoped that the Special Rapporteur would study the situation in other regions, particularly Asia, where mercenary activity was not necessarily contractual but was very often tinged with religious fervour and misplaced ideological motivations.

53. Racism, in its classical as well as in newer forms, continued to exist. At its core lay the denial of human dignity and intolerance of differences. No one was born with racist feelings, so racism could be fought through education. Change had to come from within the child's immediate social and family environment during his early years. That process would take time, but recognition over the past half century of the dangers of racism had been a major step forward. However, much remained to be done. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had done important work in that area since its creation in 1970. His delegation welcomed the General Assembly's decision in 1997 to hold a World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and noted with satisfaction the progress made during the preparatory process as described in the report of the Secretary-General. It also welcomed the establishment of a racism project team in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights within the framework of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. Finally, his delegation hoped that, in preparations for the World Conference, as well as in the implementation of the Programme of Action, greater attention would be devoted to the social and psychological dimensions of racism and to a much more holistic approach to the problem.

54. **Mr. Seriwa** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) paid tribute on behalf of his delegation to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the activities it had conducted in the context of the Programme of Action of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and of the preparatory process of the world Conference.

55. In spite of the efforts of the international community, the phenomenon of racism was becoming more acute in many regions of the world. According to the report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism (A/54/347), racism and xenophobia continued to manifest themselves in violent forms resulting from the activities of racist and neo-Nazi organizations. On the Internet, Jewish organizations in the United States of America and the United Kingdom were engaged in anti-Arab and anti-Muslim propaganda, and such offensive use of the new medium was bound to cause concern. Human rights violations and discriminatory practices against black, Arab, Muslim and

other minorities in a number of countries claiming to be civilized should also be denounced. All necessary measures should therefore be taken at the international level to thwart racism in all its forms.

56. His delegation reiterated its support for the convening of a world conference against racism by the year 2001 and considered that South Africa had all the necessary requirements for it to be a success. All the requisite material resources should be made available to the Conference so that it was able to consider the progress achieved in eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and the obstacles that remained.

57. The right of peoples to self-determination was a right enshrined in all international human rights instruments and documents. Nevertheless, it was a right that continued to be refused to populations living under occupation or living in a foreign country while waiting to be able to return home. That had been the case of the Palestinians since 1948. They were still awaiting implementation of United Nations resolutions affirming their right to self-determination, to return to their land and to establish an independent State.

58. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had no experience of problems of religious, racial or other discrimination, having always condemned racism and intolerance in all their forms and manifestations, and was in conformity with all the relevant international instruments. Libyan laws, which drew their inspiration from Islam, accorded particular importance to justice and equality, without consideration of race, religion or language, for all those living on Libyan territory.

59. **Mr. Ife Ajewole** (Nigeria) said that his country was concerned about the phenomenon of racism and racial discrimination which was on the increase and manifesting itself in diverse forms, including the Internet. It was also regrettable that racism in its violent form was instigated by State officials responsible for keeping peace and by some racist organizations. Nigeria, as a multicultural and multi-ethnic society, considered that the expansion of racism was totally unacceptable, and as a nation, was committed to the rule of law, which embraced the notion of equality before the law. Foreign nationals living in Nigeria, of whatever race, were not discriminated against or subjected to a different legal code.

60. Racism and racial discrimination not only had negative consequences for socio-economic and political development but also constituted a threat to peace and stability. Ethnic cleansing and genocide were examples of the effects which hatred, racism and racial intolerance could have on society.

61. Governments had the responsibility to adopt administrative and legislative measures that would promote tolerance. They should also prosecute the perpetrators of all acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. Further measures, such as human rights education in schools, should raise the level of awareness among citizens, particularly young people, civil servants and law enforcement agents.

62. Racism and racial discrimination were among the worst forms of human rights violations. It was therefore necessary to demonstrate an abiding commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, which advocated tolerance among nations. The global partnership would not have any meaning if migrant workers and their families, persons belonging to minorities and members of vulnerable groups continued to be affected by racism, racial discrimination and lack of freedom of movement.

63. As for the use of the Internet for spreading ideas of racial superiority and incitement to hatred, it was incumbent upon government and law enforcement authorities, communications experts and users of modern communication technologies to curb irresponsible use of the Internet. His delegation would support any international effort aimed at developing a code of conduct for using the Internet without compromising individual rights such as freedom of expression.

64. As for implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, his delegation continued to support fully the holding of a world conference against racism and racial discrimination before the end of 2001 and welcomed South Africa's offer to host it. In that connection, it was encouraged by the activities of the racism project team established by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the proposals for obtaining resources to implement the Programme of Action.

65. With reference to the question of the rights of peoples to self-determination, the Commission on Human Rights had drawn attention to the effects of colonialism or occupation on the exercise of that right. In his report, the Special Rapporteur had shown that the use of mercenaries to violate human rights and to impede the right of peoples to self-determination remained a serious problem. His delegation therefore urged all States to respect the provisions of General Assembly resolution 49/150 regarding signing and ratifying the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries

and to reaffirm General Assembly resolution 52/112 and Commission of Human Rights resolution 1998/6.

66. The use of mercenaries remained of critical concern to his delegation, since the African region was very vulnerable to their activities in a number of conflicts. As the Special Rapporteur had observed, the use of mercenaries, even in guises which gave them a semblance of legitimacy, remained a threat to the self-determination of peoples in the areas where they operated. His delegation endorsed the recommendation calling on States to adopt practical legislation to prohibit the use of their territories for the recruitment, training, financing and use of mercenaries.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.